

### **Do I have to provide the evaluations necessary for my child?**

The school district will provide any necessary evaluations to determine if the student has a disability that significantly impacts a major life function.

### **Does my child have to go through the Student Support Team (SST) process before being referred to Section 504?**

No. If the parent or school has reason to believe that a student has a disability that impacts the student's ability to access their education, the school should move directly to the Section 504 process. Occasionally, through the SST process the team decides the student should go through the Special Education or Section 504 process.

### **Does my child have to go through the Special Education process before being referred to Section 504?**

No. If a student has a disability which impacts their ability to access their education, the 504 process can begin without referring to Special Education. However, sometime a student will be evaluated for Special Education and found to have a disability but not require Special Education. A student may need accommodations to access his or her education. In this case, the student will be referred to the Section 504 process.

### **What if I have concerns about how the Section 504 process occurred for my child?**

You can obtain the DCPS grievance process from the Section 504 Coordinator at the school or from the staff listed below.

The process can go through 3 steps:

- Informal mediation with the principal
- Written grievance to Section 504 staff listed below.
- Impartial Hearing

Parents may also contact:  
US Office of Civil Rights /DC  
US Dept of Education  
400 Maryland Ave SW  
Washington DC 20202  
202-245-8300  
TDD1-877-521-2172  
[www.ed.gov/ocr](http://www.ed.gov/ocr)

**Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.**



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## **Section 504 for Parents and Guardians**

### **What is Section 504?**

Section 504 is part of the Americans with Disabilities Act that was originally passed in 1973 and was reauthorized in January 2009. This law guarantees access to education for students with disabilities.

# Frequently Asked Questions about Section 504

## How does a student qualify as a person with a disability under Section 504?

In order to qualify as a person with a disability under Section 504 an individual must:

1. have a physical or mental impairment that
2. substantially limits
3. a major life activity.

## What is a physical or mental impairment?

A "physical or mental impairment" means

a) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine or

b) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

## How can Section 504 help my child?

Section 504 allows for accommodations that allow students **access** to their education. This does not generally include changes to a student's curriculum or instruction such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language or counseling.

## What should I do if I think my child qualifies for Section 504?

- Contact your school's Section 504 Coordinator about your concerns.
- Share all documentation of your child's disability with the school.
- Attend a Section 504 Eligibility meeting where your child will be discussed and where, if applicable, a plan will be developed for your child.

## What happens after I contact the school's Section 504 Coordinator?

The Coordinator will work to gather all documentation about your child and to schedule a meeting with a team of people who know the student the best including the parent or guardian. At this meeting, the team will discuss all information available and determine if a decision can be made and if any evaluations are needed. If there is enough information, the team will determine if the student is eligible for Section 504 and what, if any, accommodations are necessary for your child.

## What is a major life activity?

Major life activities include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. In the Amendments Act, Congress provided additional examples of general activities that are major life activities, including eating, sleeping, standing, lifting, bending, reading, concentrating, thinking, and communicating. Congress also provided a non-exhaustive list of examples of "major bodily functions" that are major life activities, such as the functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions. This list is not exhaustive.

## What information is needed for determining eligibility for Section 504?

- Medical or psychological documentation of the disability
- Educational records, grades, observations
- All other information that helps to give a full picture of the student

## Is a report from my doctor enough for my student to qualify for Section 504?

No. The eligibility process for Section 504 requires that the team take into consideration **all** available information about the student and his/her ability to access his/her education .